

Statewide Fire Risk Assessments Protect Property

Risk management is something we all do every day. Nearly every decision made is risk related: fasten the seat belt; wear sunscreen; lock the door. If your home or business is near open lands, you need to know your risk for property loss from wildland fire and you need to know what you can do to reduce your risk level.

Providing that information to Nevada communities is the goal behind a BLM grant of \$1.35 million to the Nevada Fire Safe Council to assess the wildland fire threat and to develop mitigation plans for each county.

The assessments incorporate information that pertains to fuel hazards, slope, aspect, ignition risk and local fire suppression capabilities into a final analysis. Areas of natural resource or economic values, as well as critical habitat for wildlife, critical watersheds, utility corridors, historic and cultural sites, and other infrastructure components are identified on risk and hazard assessment maps.

Resource Concepts, Inc., (RCI) was awarded the contract to conduct the survey and coordinate with county, state and federal fire suppression agencies, local governments, community leaders and interested citizens during the evaluation and plan development. A technical advisory committee composed of volunteers, Nevada Fire Safe Council Board members, city and rural fire chiefs, subject matter experts, and county representatives provided oversight.

Fire Safe Council members held community meetings in all counties and made presentations at public county commission meetings. As county assessments were

completed, key individuals and fire chiefs identified within the county were given the opportunity to review the draft plans during a comment period. As draft plans became finalized, presentations were made to each county commission.

Once approved by the county commissioners, local fire chiefs and the state forester, the final reports qualify as Community Wildfire Protection Plans under the guidelines established by the Healthy Forest Restoration Act. This will enable communities to apply for grants to implement the recommendations for reducing risks from wildfire. Communities with approved Community Wildfire Protection Plans will be given funding priority for hazardous fuels reduction projects.

Funding for the Nevada Fire Safe Council has come from diverse sources, including BLM, Forest Service, Nevada Legislature, Nevada Division of Forestry, Nevada Rural Economic Development, Sierra Front Wildfire Cooperators, and Nevada Insurance Council.

If you live near wildlands, find out how to reduce your risk from wildland fire. Call the University of Nevada, Cooperative Extension or BLM office near you to receive a copy of "Living with Fire, A Guide for the Homeowner." The information is also available at www.livingwithfire.info.

– Richard Brown
Nevada State Office

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State Director's Column



It is a privilege to return to Nevada where I started my career with BLM as a Range Aid in 1971 and served as the Winnemucca District/Field Manager from 1988 to 1998. Over those decades our public lands in Nevada have continually increased in national, state and local importance. From providing land and resources for community expansion to protecting special areas like the Black Rock Desert/High Rock Canyon and Red Rock NCAs our responsibilities as managers of our public land increases as each year goes by. Many communities are dependent on the public lands for their livelihood, recreation and energy development are becoming more in demand while mining and livestock grazing remain important uses of the public lands. Multiple use continues to be the cornerstone as we manage the public lands for the benefit of all Americans.

One of our biggest challenges facing us is the need to restore and protect our public lands from noxious weeds and invasive species, and to make them more resistant to catastrophic wildland fires. The Great Basin Restoration Initiative set the stage for organizing the efforts of many to keep these lands healthy and productive for future generations.

I am looking forward to being a champion for this ambitious and worthwhile initiative, which is an umbrella for a variety of work to benefit the public lands in Nevada. The initiative includes projects that span landscapes and watersheds, such as the Eastern Nevada Landscape Restoration Project and our efforts to restore and protect sagebrush habitat across the state. And it includes projects such as riparian restoration and weed control that make a big difference for the areas where they are located.

It will take years to get where we need to be, and the involvement of many, but we won't lose sight of our goal. BLM has wonderful partners in Nevada, and we could

not come close to accomplishing the work needed without them.

It is exciting to be part of a new era of energy development, especially renewable resources. The public lands in Nevada have the potential to provide an amazing supply of energy from sources like geothermal, wind and solar.

For a long time, only a small number of people knew about the awesome recreational opportunities on Nevada's public lands. It comes as no surprise that the secret is out. There are still many places in Nevada to enjoy the solitude many people love about this state. As a public land manager, it gives me pleasure to know that more and more Americans are discovering and enjoying their public lands.

Change, variety and people make being a state director one of the most interesting jobs in the BLM. I am honored to serve as the BLM Nevada State Director, and look forward to working with the all of our employees, partners and friends.

- Ron Wenker
State Director

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Elko Land Sale Planned

For a long time, the person on the street didn't have much of a chance to buy public lands. That started to change five years ago with land sales in Las Vegas under the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNLPMA). Now, every BLM field office is reviewing its land use plans to offer parcels that are designated as disposal lands. The BLM Elko Field Office is preparing to hold its second public land auction in two years. Nearly 3,906 acres will be offered; 10 parcels in Elko County and one parcel in Eureka County. The parcels range in size from 80 acres to 663 acres and will be sold competitively to the highest bidder. The minimum bid will begin at the appraised fair market value. The sale will be held this winter.

"There has been an increasing interest in private acquisition of some federally managed land in Elko County," said BLM Elko Field Manager Helen Hankins. "The Elko Office began meeting with local governments more than two years ago to discuss plans for land sales. All the lands to be offered for sale are identified for disposal in the Elko Land Use Plan, which was completed before 2000."

The Elko Office held a land sale last September, offering five parcels. Two parcels sold at or near appraised fair market value, the other three parcels received no bids and were subsequently included in a SNLPMA auction in Las Vegas.

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA, flip-ma) provides sale authority for public lands that are uneconomic or difficult to manage. These kinds of lands must be identified for disposal in a BLM land use plan. While many land use plans identified lands for disposal, BLM hasn't had the funding to do the necessary surveys and appraisals to prepare the lands for sale. Consequently, few sales were offered.

Passage of the Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act of 2000 (FLTFA, flit-fa) opened the door for BLM sales of disposal lands by establishing a funding mechanism to pay BLM's administrative costs. When public land sales

are conducted under FLTFA, the proceeds from the sale of public lands in Nevada mostly stay in Nevada. Four percent is taken off the top for state educational purposes or for construction of public roads. Of the 96 percent left, 80 percent goes to the acquisition of exceptional resource lands and up to 20 percent may be used for administrative and other expenses necessary to carry out the program.

People interested in bidding are encouraged to get a copy of the land sale booklet which contains bid instructions, maps of the parcels, legal descriptions, fair market valuations, list of encumbrances, and the required sale bid and certificate of eligibility form. Bidders should inspect the parcels prior to the auction. **The booklet and a description of the parcels are available at the BLM Elko Field Office, 3900 East Idaho Street, Elko, NV 89815 or call Darci Beaupeurt at (775) 753-0251, email dj_beaupeurt@nv.blm.gov.**

- Mike Brown
Elko Field Office

Southern Nevada Land Sale

A public land auction will be held on Nov. 16, 2005, in Las Vegas at the Cashman Center. Offered for sale will be 86 parcels in the Las Vegas Valley and six parcels in Laughlin, Nev. The General Services Administration, Office of Property Disposal conducts the sale. **For more information or to request to receive a sales pamphlet, call 1-888-472-5263 ext. 3408 for Fabian Huey, email:fabian.huey@gsa.gov, or ext. 3431 for Gina Arias-Arrieta, email:gina.arias-arrieta@gsa.gov.**



NEVADA STYLE

Natural Disaster – Nevada Style

A wet winter and spring were a welcome change from years of drought in southeastern Nevada. The rains nurtured native plants and grasses, and a bumper crop of cheatgrass and red brome, invasive species that when sparked with fire, burn as if they were soaked with gasoline. In late June and early July, storm clouds rolled in and the skies crackled with dry lightning and there was barely a hint of rain. With no moisture to dampen the electrical frenzy, fire starts in the dry grasses ran wild.

Feeding on a carpet of fine fuels, the wind-driven wildfires swept through the desert, a landscape that used to be fairly resistant to wildfire, racing up into higher elevations to consume sagebrush, oak brush, pinyon, juniper and ponderosa pine, despite the efforts of thousands of firefighters battling for control.

When the fires were out and the smoke cleared, the charred 700,000 acres revealed a staggering loss of habitat for desert tortoise and eight other species that are listed as threatened or endangered, including the majestic bald eagle, a once proud patroller of our nation's skies, to the



A thick carpet red of brome surrounds a beavertail cactus. Invasive grasses such as red brome and cheatgrass helped fuel a massive series of wildfires in Clark and Lincoln counties this summer.

minuscule Meadow Valley Wash speckled dace, known to reside only in a single spring. Forage for wildlife and livestock was also impacted by the fires.

Within a week, a Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) Team was assembled to begin fire assessments. The eleven-member team, representing the BLM, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Forest Service and National Park Service, identified issues such as the potential for post-fire erosion and flooding, and large-scale expansion of noxious weeds and invasive species. The Team defined primary objectives to protect life and property and to reduce further degradation of the watersheds that would result in additional loss of habitat.

Stabilizing and rehabilitating the multiple watersheds involved in the fire will be an even more monumental task than it was to fight the fires.

An emergency stabilization plan is being implemented and the longer-term burned area rehabilitation (BAR) plan is being developed to specify treatments above and beyond those provided for through the emergency stabilization process. An additional treatment might be a simple fence repair, or it might be an intense rehabilitation of an area to propagate native plant species, which could then serve as a seed base to allow for further propagation. Such islands of plants would help stabilize the ecosystem and provide habitat for wildlife.

Whatever the strategy, the challenge is to prevent the Mojave Desert ecosystem from sliding into a cheatgrass, red brome, Sahara mustard dominated plant community that will only intensify and increase the incidence of catastrophic wildland fires.

– **Chris Hanefeld**
Ely Field Office



EDUCATION

Student Fire Education Team

The five college students that formed Fire Education Corps Team–Carson City began the summer season with almost no fire experience, but they quickly cultivated their knowledge and skills regarding fire prevention, participated in the organized chaos that occurs during wildland fire suppression, and helped with Sierra Front community efforts to rehabilitate burned areas.

The team's primary objective was to educate homeowners about the threat of wildfire and steps they can take to create defensible/survivable space around their homes; neither baking sun, nor blistering heat, nor barking dogs could deter the team from going door-to-door in East Washoe, Smith Valley, and North Carson, spreading the word about defensible space and informing homeowners about proposed mechanical fuel treatments on BLM land. They also conducted home evaluations for wildfire risk, offering homeowners specific suggestions of simple things they could do to reduce the likelihood that their home would be destroyed by wildland fire. They collected wildfire risk data for each evaluated home using standardized methods. This data will give the local volunteer fire departments a "snapshot" of the risk to homes in their district.

While the team's focus was fire prevention, they were able to assist when fires did occur; whether it was shuttling food and ice to fire camp or driving a few hours to pick up a group of smokejumpers, Team Carson City was happy to help out.

The team watered Jeffery pines that were planted to speed rehabilitation of an area that was burned in the 2004 Waterfall Fire, witnessing firsthand the devastation that fire can cause, and how the plants and wildlife bounce back after a fire.

Members of the Fire Education Corps are young adults from around the country, who through the Student Conservation Association, come together to serve the community, forgoing a typical summer job in order to spend their summer doing community service, honing professional skills, making friends, and having an unforgettable experience.

– **Mark Struble**
*Carson City
Field Office*



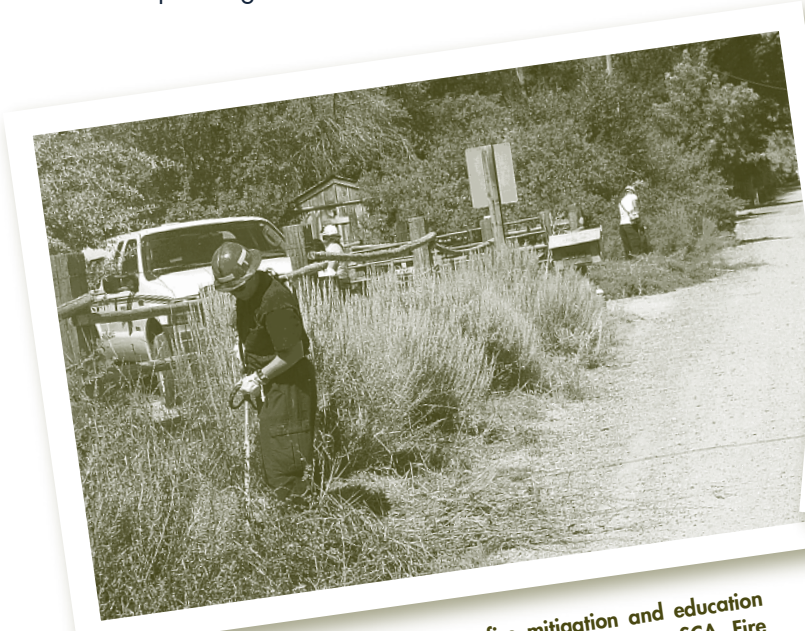
SCA Team Carson City
(from left)
Indiana Cruz, Arcata, CA;
Ben Hopkins, Kings Beach, CA;
Liz Wilcox, Asheville, NC;
Suzanne Price, Abbeville, SC;
and **Rachel Sumner**, Heath, MA

DEFENSIBLE SPACE

Unionville Home

The tiny hamlet of Unionville has felt the threat of wildland fire. Situated on the east slope of the Humboldt Range, about 40 miles southwest of Winnemucca, the historic town's heyday was of the silver boom years along with the Comstock Lode. (A young Sam Clemens tried his luck at striking it rich in Unionville. History shows that Clemens was forced to try his hand at other work under the name Mark Twain.)

A wildland fire in 2001 nearly burned the town down. Flames from the Peru Fire burned within 20 feet of several homes, but no structures were damaged thanks to an all-out effort by fire fighters. When members of the Student Conservation Association (SCA) Fire Education Corps visited Unionville they saw a good place to showcase defensible space against wildfire.



Winnemucca/Battle Mountain BLM Zone fire mitigation and education specialist Jennifer Myslivy (foreground) and Winnemucca SCA Fire Education Corps member Michael Pluff (right background) use heavy-duty string trimmers to cut away years of accumulated brush from along a wooden fence line to reduce the risk of damage from wildfire.

On an early Sunday morning in July, a cadre of workers from several agencies and offices arrived at Jeannie Koons' home, intent on protecting the town and its residents from the dangers of wild land fire. The project was designed to achieve two goals: to make the home of 72-year-old Koons safer from wildfire and to create a demonstration site that would serve as an example of how space around residences that is made defensible against wildfire can be attractive, not just bare.

The bulk of the work was completed that Sunday, but it took several more days for the Winnemucca SCA Corps to complete all the finishing touches.



Before work began thick brush choked Buena Vista Creek and nearly obscured the picturesque covered bridge over the driveway leading to the Koons' home. The overgrown vegetation next to the structure was a high fire risk and it obscured the house from view from the road. The cleared area protects the bridge and improves visibility of the home. Now it is possible for vehicles too large to fit through the bridge, such as wildland fire engines, to ford the creek in an emergency.

DEFENSIBLE SPACE

A Showcase for Defensible Space

WORK INCLUDED:

- removing substantial amounts of duff and debris that had built up close to the house and on the roof over the years;
- trimming trees of dead wood and lower limbs that could have acted as means to rapidly spread wildfire from grasses at ground level to engulf entire trees and endanger nearby structures;
- clearing brush away from the house, covered bridge, and several outbuildings;
- installing a gravel walkway and re-graveling the driveway to create firebreaks protecting the house;
- chipping tons of brush and debris into mulch that was spread over a large area between the house and a mountainside to inhibit the growth of new weeds and shrubs that would become potential fuels for wildfires; and
- creating a zeriscape (low water use, drought tolerant) planting area that is fire resistant and attractive in the mulched area.

At the height of the day's activity, Koons was asked if there were any trout in the perennial Buena Vista Creek flowing beneath her covered bridge.

"There used to be," she answered sadly, **"but not anymore. Not since it flowed so muddy for weeks this spring with all the heavy rains we had on top of the big snowmelt."**

A bit later, when much of the brush upstream and downstream of the covered bridge had been removed affording an unobstructed view of the creek, at least three brown trout were seen basking in the sun in a pool almost under the bridge. Informed of this, a broad smile broke out on Koons' face.

- Jamie Thompson
Winnemucca Field Office



Nevada Division of Forestry crew clears a fire break from the yard.

PARTNERS

- **SCA FIRE EDUCATION CORPS TEAM WINNEMUCCA:**
Judith Katz, Chicago, Illinois
Aaron Berdanier, Rapid City, South Dakota
Nichole Baker, Streetsboro, Ohio
Heather Aschoff, Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Michael Pluff, Fulton, New York
- **SCA FIRE EDUCATION CORPS TEAM CARSON CITY**
- **NEVADA DIVISION OF FORESTRY**
- **BLM WINNEMUCCA FIRE ENGINE AND CREW**
- **ROUND TABLE PIZZA IN WINNEMUCCA**

The Student Conservation Association is composed of men and women from all over the United States with the mission of improving environmental conditions in specific areas.

More information about the SCA is available online at <http://www.thesca.org/>.

NEVADA RESTORATION

Banking Seeds

Native plant seed from Sand Mountain and other locations will be on their way to the Royal Botanic Gardens in England, where they will be cleaned, assessed and stored. Half of the seeds sent to England will be kept for long-term storage and research and half will make their way back to Nevada to be used for restoration projects.

The Seeds of Success is a BLM project partnership with the Royal Botanic Garden and several other partners throughout the country. It is the United States branch of a larger, global conservation project called the Millennium Seed Bank Project. The project focus is on identifying, collecting, and storing plant material and seeds of native plants in 16 countries that are needed for restoration and rehabilitation of public lands as well as long-term conservation of plant biodiversity.

The overall goal of the Millennium Seed Bank Project is daunting—collect the seeds of 10 percent of the world's terrestrial plants by the year 2010.

The Carson City Field Office organized a Seeds of Success team to carry out the collection work, providing the interns the opportunity to learn about BLM, desert plant ecology and teamwork.

The team spent most of the summer identifying and collecting the seeds of important local native plants. Potential plant restoration projects include fire rehabilitation and native plant restoration in disturbed areas overrun by noxious weeds.

The interns gathered native seeds at Sand Mountain and assisted BLM in monitoring the use of off-highway vehicle trails and the impact on the native plants and habitats in the area. They mapped invasive salt cedar in the Stillwater Mountains, and learned how to do vegetation mapping of various unique vegetation types at the Casey Ranch in Washoe Valley.

The SCA mission is "changing lives through service to nature." The students had the chance to be part of a global project as well as projects unique to Nevada. The team's work on mapping and documenting distinct populations of *Eriogonum diatomacium*, a critically endangered plant in the state, was especially helpful. This species of buckwheat grows only on diatomaceous earth, which has a high commercial value due to a high content of silica. Mapping all known locations of *Eriogonum diatomacium* populations now is important to track population increases or decreases over the years.



Mark Struble
Carson City Field Office

Rachel Brush and Theresa Milstein collect *Descurainia californica* seed, commonly known as Sierra tansy mustard.

SEEDS OF SUCCESS TEAM MEMBERS:

Dean Tonenna, BLM botanist

Rebecca Friedman, Nevada Conservation Corps

Rachel Brush, Student Conservation Association

Jeb Bjerke, Student Conservation Association

Erik Lema, Student Conservation Association

Theresa Milstein, Student Conservation Association

BOOTSTRAP PROGRAM

Battle Mountain Teens Learn Life and Job Skills

When most students think of summer jobs, they might picture working at a movie theater or fast food restaurant. If you live in Battle Mountain there aren't many jobs available for young people. This summer five Battle Mountain teens had an opportunity to get paid to protect crucial sage grouse habitats on public lands near their community.

Ulises Rivera, 19; Juan Ranel, 18; Joel Farnsworth, 18; Mason Mauldin, 18; and Heidi Thomsen, 19; are part of a pilot program that prepares recent high school graduates with work experience and job skills. The BLM's Battle Mountain Field Office, the University of Nevada's Cooperative Extension Program and Lander County got together to create the Bootstrap program.

Rod Davis, Lander County Cooperative Extension educator, oversees the program.

"These kids are getting great future references and life skills," said Davis, "and sage grouse habitat is being protected."

The five teens completed several projects: they constructed four riparian meadow fences that protect and enhance

the sage grouse brood rearing habitat; they built several aspen protection exclosures; and they conducted maintenance on two wildlife water developments infested by Mormon crickets.

"The program teaches cooperation and teamwork," Davis said. "If you live in a city like Las Vegas there may be plenty of opportunities for self-exploration and learning experiences, but these kids' only other job options are to stack groceries or make french fries. This program is an opportunity for career counseling intervention."

Nora Devoe, BLM's Cooperative Ecosystem Studies coordinator assisted in setting up the cooperative agreement between UNR and BLM for the Bootstrap program.

"BLM Battle Mountain benefits by having a flexible seasonal workforce," said DeVoe. "We want to build a positive relationship between BLM and the community by getting people involved with the public lands."

- Noelle White
Nevada State Office



Two of the tasks workers in the Bootstrap program accomplished was to put up a protective fences around aspen trees and perform maintenance on wildlife water developments infested with Mormon crickets.

VALLEY MOUNTAIN

Providing a reliable source of water to wildlife is the reason behind installing devices to collect and store rain and snow. These devices, called guzzlers, are fenced to exclude livestock and horses. First, a backhoe is used to clear and smooth the area for polyethylene collection aprons. The aprons collect precipitation and are plumbed to 1,800 gallon storage tanks with built in wildlife drinkers. The aprons are secured in place by placing rocks on top and burying the edges in a trench. The Valley Mountain guzzler project was constructed in June with Challenge Cost Share funding from BLM and partners including Elko Bighorns, Mule Deer Foundation, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Nevada Department of Wildlife and SWEATCO, a group of volunteers in the Elko area.

Photos by Joe Doucette, Nevada Department of Wildlife



GUZZLER PROJECT



National Awards

THE CITY OF ELY will receive a Department of the Interior Environmental Achievement Award for their White Pine Green Up project. The award will be presented to representatives of the city and BLM on Oct. 25 by Lynn Scarlett, assistant secretary for policy, management and budget at the Main Interior Building in Washington, D.C. The Green Up project is a five-year pilot program aimed at reducing illegal dumping on public land by allowing residents to drop off old appliances, leftover construction material, worn-out cars and tires free of charge at the city's landfill.

NEWMONT MINING CORPORATION received a Reclamation and Sustainable Mineral Development Award in recognition of the company's commitment to promoting economic development and contributing to the social and economic infrastructure of local communities. Newmont is an effective partner with BLM as well as area businesses, educational institutions, local governments and other federal agencies.

OFFBEAT COLLECTIONS OFF-THE-BEATEN PATH



License plates adorn a gate in the Black Rock Desert. Colorful strings of glass bottle necks near the Rhyolite Bottle House.

BLM photos by Stan White.

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